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RECOLLECTIONS OF 1864 - 5
AFTER FORTY YEARS.



Recollections of 1864-5

After Forty Years.

WRITTEN BY

M. S. HARVEY,

Co. F, 13th Ohio Vol. Cav.

This little sketch is respectfully dedicated to

BENSON HEALE HARVEY.

Written through the persistent requests of his father.

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M. S. HARVEY, 1864.

Recollections of 1864-5.

During the winter of 1863-4 I became imbued with a spirit of patriotism, from which I could not dispossess myself, though I tried earnestly to do so, inasmuch as two of my brothers had already enlisted, one of them having returned home disabled for life.

Therefore, on the 18th of February, 1864, with the mercury nine degrees below zero, I rode eleven miles to Zanesville on horseback, sought a recruiting station, enlisted as one of my country's defenders, took the prescribed oath, put on the government uniform and rode back home, where I remained for a few days, performing the ordinary routine work of the farm.

We were ordered to Columbus, Ohio, and were sent to Camp Chase, three miles west of the city on the National road (but now a part of the city). We remained here with but little to do (not even drilling, as we should have done) until about the 8th of May when we were mustered into the United States service as the Thirteenth Ohio Volunteer Cavalry for three years, or during the war, and were assigned to Company F.

About the 11th of May we were ordered to Washington, D. C. We went by way of Mansfield, Pittsburg, Harrisburg and Baltimore, traveling in freight cars such as are used for shipping grain, feed, etc.

Arriving in Washington we were placed in

the barracks near the capitol building, where I think we spent two nights and a day.

We then marched over the long bridge to Arlington Heights, Virginia, through a dreary rain, but everybody was cheerful, knowing that we were on our way to the front and that we would soon get into active service, which was our crowning ambition.

Having arrived on the Heights we were issued field tents, commonly called "dog tents." They were about five feet long and five feet wide; each soldier was allowed to draw two pieces and by two boys tenting together, they would have side pieces and a piece for each end of their tent. Each piece of canvas was provided with several short loops of rope at one end and a row of buttons and button holes at the other, so that it could be doubly fastened at the top. We put them up by driving two sticks into the ground about four feet high; a pole was put across these, the canvas was drawn taut, staked to the ground, two end pieces were hung on and we were ready to crawl in and go to sleep. This was all very nice when there was no hard marching to do, but when the first forced march came everything that could be disposed of was thrown away, saving nothing but blankets, frying pan, rations, canteen, ammunition and gun.

But to return to my narrative. The rain continued to pour down and with clothes soaked and the ground soaked beneath our feet, it was a very uncomfortable introduction to the life that was before us and a sorry contrast to the comforts of homes that we had so recently left.

A large barn stood about one-half mile from us on a small hill; when night came I took two comrades and in the darkness passed the guards, slept comfortably in the barn and returned to camp early in the morning, to find

the boys in a frenzy of rage and cursing with oaths unutterable. For some large boxes had been opened and the regiment was being armed with Springfield rifles and was ordered to serve as infantry during the campaign of '64. But there was no redress; military orders must be obeyed.

Being armed and rationed we were now ready for service and were marched down the Potomac to Alexandria. Halting here for a few hours, I visited the spot where Colonel Ellsworth was shot for pulling down the rebel flag. Here, too, I first saw the "slave block," that upon which negroes were compelled to stand while being sold to their fellow men. After a few hours' stay here we boarded a steamer and had a beautiful trip down the Potomac, passed Mt. Vernon, the former home of George Washington, and finally landed at the mouth of Aquia creek, that being the base of supplies for the Army of the Potomac. We marched to the heights above the landing and camped among the graves of the dead of Hooker's army.

We left here in a few days, guarding to the front an immense wagon train consisting of all kinds of supplies for Grant's army. To each wagon was hitched six mules, many of them wild, untrained animals that had never been in harness, having been bought in different parts of the country by government agents; and the tangle and confusion in that train was enough to weary the patience of the saints. The train was many miles in length and was a wonderful temptation to the hungry Confederate army.

Before starting we had been issued one hundred and twenty rounds of ammunition and five days' rations. This, with a canteen of water and our camp equipage made a load no soldier could carry and march through the heat and dust. Therefore, when weary and footsore

we began to throw away that which was the least needful and by the close of the first day's forced march, we were relieved of about everything but the clothes on our bodies, one wool and one oil blanket, canteen and frying pan. Our guns, ammunition and rations we never parted with under any conditions.

We crossed the Rappahannock at Port Royal through a perfect deluge of rain and hail and went into camp on the low lands near the river. I went to a hedge nearby and gathered several armfuls of brush and made quite a heap, spread my blanket on top and thought I would sleep above the flood that night. But the waters came down from the surrounding hills, my brush pile settled beneath its weight and when I awoke in the morning one-half of my body was under water and that part of it will never be any colder when in the grave than it was that morning. As I had been away from the comforts of home only but a short time, I thought such exposure would kill a boy in a few hours. But a pint of hot water, a little fat meat and a couple of hard tack, accompanied by some hard marching, soon made me feel as well as ever.

We got our train through safely, which caused many a Yankee soldier's heart and stomach to swell with gratitude and hardtack.

We were now fully in the enemy's country and the destruction and devastation of war was all around us. This part of the country had been so over run by both armies that scarcely a vestige of property was left of any value whatever that fire would consume or that either army could use or destroy. All that was left on those grand old plantations was the growing timber and the tall chimneys that marked the place where once stood the palatial residence of the slave holder. Not a book of any kind, not even a domestic fowl was

to be seen in all this country. Everything destructible was destroyed. This was part of the penalty they were paying for their sacred institution which caused them to be disloyal to their country.

We joined the army of the Potomac and took part in the flank movement from Spotsylvania Court House to Cold Harbor and the James river.

The distance from the Rappahannock to the James river is not great, but the counter-marches and flank movements we made, exposure, lack of rations and water, with the loss of sleep and the forced marches we made, wore out many a stout, rugged boy and filled many a home with sorrow.

Soon after crossing the Rappahannock, a rebel spy was caught in our lines. The last I saw of him he was lying on his back with arms extended and hands tied to bayonets driven in the ground and a bayonet on each side of his neck, so that the shoulders of the bayonets closed down tight on his throat, and a soldier with loaded musket stood over him.

About the first of June we waded the North Ann river, the water coming up to our shoulders. We placed our ammunition and blankets (our rations being exhausted) on the ends of our guns, held them over our heads and plunged into the river, the taller boys holding the shorter ones from being washed down stream. We landed on the other shore with the loss of but few men and were rushed forward as rapidly as possible for some great movement was being accomplished, though we were as ignorant of the object in view as a child would be of the controlling forces of a ship at sea.

Late at night, we went into camp and were issued a ration of beef that had just been killed; at this moment the bugle sounded and we were ordered to fall into line and be ready

to march in three minutes, for our guide had led us into a trap and we were within the rebel lines. Sixteen men were detailed and given sixteen muskets, eight being loaded with ball and eight with blank cartridges, so that no soldier would know who fired the fatal shot. The guide was taken just beyond the edge of the camp, when the report of sixteen guns was heard almost as the sound of one, and he never led another army.

As we had been out of rations all day I tried to swallow some of the raw beef that had been given us, while the animal heat was still in it, but it was a miserable failure.

Then followed the most distressing night march of my life. Hungry, weak, tired and footsore, in a steady downpour of rain we started out in the dense darkness, trying to follow each other over a blind road, sometimes almost mired in the mud, sometimes stepping into the rotten carcass of a dead mule, sometimes straggling out of the road and striking square against a tree, as we could not see one inch ahead of us in that dense pine forest. I am sure that more than once I was sound asleep that night while marching.

About midnight we came to a river where the rebels had destroyed the bridge, all but the four sills on which we crawled over.

Three times during that night I spread my blankets by the roadside, completely exhausted; but after a short rest some strength and ambition would return and I would be up and march again, and it was well I did, for some rebels we captured the next day said they wakened many of our boys with their bayonets the next morning and made them prisoners.

Thus it continued through the night and until about eight o'clock next morning, when we were formed into line of battle and lay on our arms until about noon, expecting to go into

battle every minute, as there was lively fighting on our left and very near us. This, I think, was the last day's fighting of the second battle of Cold Harbor.

After the danger of an attack was over, I took off my shoes to rest my feet; but they were soon swollen so I couldn't get my shoes on again and when we marched down to Pamunky river later the sand was so hot I could scarcely endure it. Here we found some corn on the ground, where the Confederates had fed their horses; this we parched and ate and so got some strength until we received our rations.

While here an old resident who had witnessed the conflicts of two armies, offered to show me the exact spot where Pocahontas saved the life of Captain Smith; but the romance soon lost interest when we discovered that every land owner on that river owned the exact spot where Pocahontas saved the life of Captain Smith.

Here I met and conversed for the first time with General Sheridan, who was on his way to the extreme left of the army. In almost the time it takes me to write it, his engineers had a pontoon bridge across the river and his troops were crossing (two or three days before this we were in sight of Richmond at Fair Oaks, I think, but how we got there and how we got away again, I cannot now explain.)

We soon left this camp and by a circuitous route arrived at White Landing, where the new base of supplies was being formed, at the head waters of York river. Here was a long line of breastworks, extending from the river below the landing to the river above, in the form of a crescent, enclosing a large tract of land that was used for a wagon yard that contained a thousand or more wagons that were being loaded, preparatory to changing the base of supplies to James river at City Point.

Southwest of us, about one mile, was a high hill or ridge, overlooking our camp. I said to a comrade one day, "What a fine position that would be for a rebel battery to shell our works." And sure enough, the next morning the rattle of musketry was heard, our pickets were driven in, and two batteries planted on the ridge. Their shells soon were around us and in our midst. The gunboats in the river exploded two of their magazines and the charge of a land force compelled them to retire, without any serious loss on our side.

About the 20th of June a large force of us under the command of General Abercrombie was put in charge of another immense wagon train, loaded with supplies, and conducted it to the James river.

It was currently reported that General Lee ordered Wade Hampton and Fitz Hugh Lee to capture that train at all hazards; that the very life of the Confederacy consisted in getting possession of those miles of wagons, packed with army rations. It seemed as if the enemy was all around that train at all hours of the day and night, dashing in on one flank and then on the other, then on the front, and then on the rear, but I think we got it through without the loss of a single wagon.

Well do I remember the day we crossed the Chickahoming on double quick, as the rebels had attacked the front of the train; and when we were halted to form line of battle, only eight of our company were present to answer to our names, the others being overcome by the dust, heat and fatigue of the march, but in a short time the enemy was driven off and we proceeded on our journey.

The next scene of special interest was at Charles City Courthouse, a small village near the James river. As we came in on the north the rebels "skedaddled" out on the south,

leaving the city in flames, everything being destroyed but the walls of the stone jail. We went into camp that night some two or three miles beyond the village, so utterly worn out and exhausted that we cared but little whether we lived or died. But that you may have some idea of human endurance I want to tell you that before we had rested ten minutes the bugle sounded and without food or rest we double quicked back through Charles City, as the rebels were about to capture the rear end of our wagon train. We formed in line of battle across the road and for some distance on either side, our regiment being on the extreme right in a dense pine forest and the night so dark that no object was visible though held right against your face. I was near our commanding officer when one of the staff came up and gave the following orders: "Hold this line as long as possible and if you must retreat order every man to take care of himself, for you can never get out of here as a command." We knelt on one knee, our guns in readiness, expecting the enemy at any moment; we did not have to wait long until we heard the clatter of the horses' feet, coming down the road at a fearful speed; but before they got well in range some one near the center of the line fired his gun; this, added to the tensivity of our nerves, was a little more than we could stand, so, without orders, the whole line let forth such a simultaneous volley that you would think the sound would reach the uttermost parts of the earth. I suppose Wade Hampton thought he had run against the whole Army of the Potomac in solid phalanx, for he retreated hastily and made no further effort to get our wagon train. That you may know what shooting is sometimes done under excitement I wish to say that there were pickets in front of us (we not knowing it at the time) but none of

them were hurt for they said the bullets cut the branches far above their heads.

The comrade in my rear, Alva James, held the muzzle of his gun very near or against my left ear when he fired and the hearing in that ear is defective today.

We felt around in the dark and piled up logs as best we could for breastworks and when daylight came found our way back to the road and that day reached the river, where we were under the protection of the gunboats; here we rested for a few days, washed the dust from our bodies, and filled our stomachs with hard-tack until our cartridge belts were tight again.

We crossed the James river, being so renewed in body and spirit that we felt strong enough to whip the whole Confederacy and the northern sympathizers combined.

This ended our hard marching for the campaign of '64. We went by easy stages in a southwesterly direction until we reached the union line of works in front of Petersburg and south of the Appomatox river. Here was a change of tactics. We had been marching and skirmishing, a dash here and there and away again, under constantly shifting scenes.

But here we were confronted by a heavy line of defenses. Here was the much-boasted of "test ditch" in which they would die before yielding to the Yankee army. Their works extended from South of Petersburg to northwest of Richmond, a distance of thirty miles or more, and ours ran parallel to theirs, as close as we could get and constantly crowding up closer.

Before entering into active service here, we were given a few days' rest. And to show the moral, or rather immoral condition of our regiment, I will give an incident or two. We never had a chaplain; in fact, I think a minister could

not live in such an atmosphere; yet the boys were as brave as they were wicked.

The regiment adjoining ours had a chaplain who held religious services several times each week. I have seen some of our boys at night seat themselves on the ground and play cards by the light that lighted the sacred page and there gamble through the entire service. On the Fourth of July we were issued a large ration of whiskey, in fact, a boy could get almost any amount he wanted, and a more drunken, disorderly lot of boys was never seen. A rough and terrible fight soon began and in a little while it became so general that there were not enough sober men in the regiment to quell the disturbance and another regiment had to be called out with loaded muskets to quiet the boys. But the most of the animosity subsided when the force of the stimulants was gone.

About the ninth or tenth of July we entered the main line of breastworks and then followed twenty-one days of hell. There is no other word in the English language that will describe the awful experience of those twenty-one days which culminated in a charge into the very pit of destruction.

Death and misery in our midst; day and night working constantly to strengthen our lines; bullets constantly whistling about us and the rebel mortar guns dropping their shells continually in our entrenchments; cutting and carrying from a long distance large poles which we placed in the ground, with their points towards the enemy, at an angle of forty-five degrees; advancing our lines whenever it could be done—this was accomplished by making a pretense of an attack on either side of the point we wanted to advance and while the enemy was expecting one attack, a party with picks and shovels would advance and work with all their might until discovered, then the

enemy's shots made it so hot for them they would have to retreat under cover of our works. They sometimes located us by the light of a great many shells they caused to explode near where they thought we were at work. This was continued every night and day until our bodily and spiritual strength became so exhausted that life had but little attraction for us. To show you how indifferent we were to danger and how deadened our sensibilities became, I remember coming in from work one day and, lying down in the trench, I went to sleep. So dead were my nerves that a ten-pound shell exploded within less than fifteen feet of me, but I did not waken until the boys dragged me into the bomb proof for safety.

A few days after this, a group of us was resting in the works when a Minie ball came diagonally across the works and struck my knee, not breaking the flesh, but causing much pain at the time. I accused the boys of having thrown it, but found, on picking it up, that it was very hot, being a spent ball from the enemy's lines.

Our line of works at this place was not more than five feet high, therefore, we were kept constantly in a stooping position for the rebel sharpshooters would put a bullet into anything that appeared above the works.

On one night I was detailed with several others to bury a comrade; one of the party was seriously wounded, another slightly so, and the bullets flew about so lively that we were obliged to abandon the task for that night.

Our food was prepared for us far in the rear and carried to us in camp kettles. I remember being at the rear one day, where the meals were being prepared, and a spent ball struck our cook, Lawson McClain, on the chest and knocked him flat on his back, but the

force of the ball was so nearly spent that he was not seriously hurt.

I mention these incidents that you may know what strange things happen in war.

While in these lines we were constantly suffering for want of water, sleep and proper food. But why continue these stories of those twenty-one days of horror, those days of unspeakable distress and anguish, that our nation might be preserved in all its splendor and power? But this, my dear boy, I think will give you a faint idea of the meaning of the word "war."

About July twenty-fifth we advanced to the picket line, a small line of defenses for the purpose of checking the enemy in case they made a charge, while the main line got ready for the attack. This picket line was about two or three hundred yards in advance of the main line, and could only be reached by passing through a covered way. This was a ditch about eight feet wide and six or eight feet deep, dug in a zigzag line by throwing the dirt to each side and in advance as we went.

The night we entered this line was very dark and in feeling about for a place to sleep I found a rifle pit, or small hole, into which I dropped and three times during that night bullets struck the earth a few inches above my head; the dirt crumbling into my face awakened me, but in a few minutes I would be asleep again, as if no danger was near.

Here one-third of our men were kept on duty all the time, with orders to keep up a constant firing, so that the enemy could not form for an attack or strengthen their lines in any way.

Thus the days passed until the night of July twenty-ninth, when we were relieved by other troops and issued rations and additional ammunition. We knew that some great move-

ment was being made but just what it was we could only guess.

But for some reason beyond our knowledge, the boys all seemed unusually sober and serious that night. No profanity or vile talk was heard, everybody's thoughts seemed to be of home and dear ones in the north. By some intuitive knowledge we seemed to understand that some awful tragedy was about to be enacted. We were not left long in doubt.

About three o'clock in the morning of the thirtieth, we were marched a little to the right and there, massed on a low piece of ground, were many thousand boys in line of battle with bayonets fixed for the charges. We were ordered in line. With bayonets fixed and guns at half cock, we lay flat on the ground. Then we knew that the long-talked-of mine was to be exploded and the rebel fort, Elliott, was to be blown up and that a great battle was to take place in the morning.

We were lying about seventy-five feet east of the rebel fort, just inside our line. A few minutes after sunrise the earth rose under us several inches, it seemed, then receded again, and, looking to the west, we saw an immense volume of smoke and dirt mingled with men, cannon, small arms, boards, camp equipage of every kind, ascending into the air a hundred feet or more; some of the men fell near our lines and came in among us in a dazed and half unconscious condition, not knowing what had happened. I saw one man pick up a union soldier's haversack and carry it away.

In an instant a hundred cannon and fifty mortar guns shook the earth with their deafening roar and poured their immense weight of shot and shell into the rebel works for about fifteen minutes, but that fifteen minutes changed what would have been a grand victory into a disgraceful defeat.

When the explosion took place, the rebels fled in consternation for some distance on each side of the fort, thinking the whole line would be blown up. By the time we were ordered to charge, they had returned to their works and received us with deadly volleys.

Immediately after getting over our own works a bullet grazed my right cheek, a few steps further, and one grazed my left cheek. Men were falling all around us, but we went straight to the crater and within its hollow we were ordered to lie down. The rebels got a terrific crossfire on us, the air seemed literally full of bullets, grape and canister and bursting shells.

We had not been there long when a shell burst very near me, a piece striking my left hip, making a great rip in my clothes; the concussion disabled me for the time, but I was not seriously wounded. Lieutenant Jewel (who a few moments later was instantly killed) ordered Cy Hoar to help me off the field.

As we were returning to our lines, we came to a wounded man, standing in a stooping position; a large shell struck him, and no part of that man could be seen.

But why dwell longer on this awful tragedy? Let it be forever effaced from human memory. The moral effect of this badly managed affair was very depressing. Many of the boys were completely discouraged and were willing to accept peace on any terms.

As there had been no rain for so many weeks, and there were so many soldiers crowded into these lines, the surface of the earth became very filthy. The dust in many places was a moving mass of vermin. Soon after this battle there came a tremendous rain and as water could now be obtained I went to the branch to wash some clothes and I think every pint of water contained a score of maggots.

But in a few days we made a flank movement to the left and got out into a clean country, and on the nineteenth of August we made a dash and captured the Welden Railroad a few miles south of Petersburg.

On the twentieth we fortified our position. Some heavy rains prevented our supply train from getting up, but boxes of coffee were carried upon mules and our strength was sustained for the work by drinking strong coffee. We would drink a pint of coffee, then work about two hours, drink more coffee, then dig and shovel with all our might. But the next day the substantials came and the aching void was soon filled.

On the twenty-first they tried to re-take the railroad and though our works were not half completed, they afforded us great protection and a feeling of security. Heretofore we had been the attacking party and they were behind the works, but here it was the reverse and we waited in comparative security to receive them. This was the most systematic engagement I ever witnessed. The rebels formed three columns deep in the edge of a pine woods about three hundred yards distant; the space between the works and our line of works was a clean, level meadow. Not a shot was fired by either side while they were forming, except by their batteries which were continually shelling our lines. We reserved our fire for a short range, our orders being not to fire a gun until the cannon in the center fort opened fire.

With a yell they came across the meadow in splendid style, everything in our line being as still as death. When they got within about a hundred yards of us, the signal was given and an awful volley of musketry, grape and canister was poured into the advancing columns; the great gaps that were mowed into their ranks by the artillery was horrible to

behold; large numbers of men falling to the ground, never to rise again, or to be borne away crippled and maimed for life.

One brigade threw down their arms and in the act of giving themselves up, others took advantage of them and tried to gain possession of our works; there was close fighting for a time, but they were soon driven back and made no further attempt to take the road. There are some incidents that, after a battle, though of comparatively small importance, affect our sympathies more than the shock of battle itself. A few days after the fight of the 19th, I was passing over the ground and found in the cornfield, in the wood, in the patches of briars, fresh mounds of dirt and a pine board at the head and many of the inscriptions were "Unknown of the Union Army;" or "Unknown of the Confederate Army." Somebody's dear boy was buried there, never to be found.

Our next move was south to Reams Station, where an engagement was in progress. We arrived about dark, just in time to hear the screeching of the last few shells and to cover the retreat, for the battle was so evenly waged that both armies retreated as soon as night came.

The night was intensely dark. The supply train, artillery and ambulance got in a tangle in a dense pine woods and completely blocked the way.

The flashing lightning, the heavy thunder, the shells from the enemy, torrents of rain pouring down, all mingled with the groans and screams of the wounded and the cursings of the teamsters, made a night never to be forgotten. But we all got out sometime during the night and the next day marched back and began strengthening our line north of where we took the Weldon railroad.

Our rations ever since we commenced the

seige of Petersburg had consisted of fat meat, beans, sugar, hard tack and coffee and we were so starved for fruit and vegetables that I bought a pie for fifty cents (dried apple pie at that), a comrade got a half pint of condensed milk for fifty cents and I never enjoyed a feast more.

Our work now was to strengthen the line that had been extended and it took lots of hard work to make miles of breast works.

We spent a number of days in an old bog with no water to drink, but the surface water, which became so foul that we had to hold our noses while we drank. As a result, a great many of us became sick. I was sent to City Point, then to Washington, D. C.

About the first of November all soldiers who were able to travel were "furloughed to vote," regardless of age (though not to vote illegally), as riots were feared in the north (there being a large element there that sympathized with the south) and the government thought that the appearance of "blue coats" among them would have a quieting effect.

At the end of thirty days I returned to Washington, where I remained during the winter, as I recovered very slowly from the fever; but I was able to go about the city, visiting all the places of interest and attending many of the sessions of Congress.

On the 4th of March, 1865, I was present at the second inauguration of Abraham Lincoln and there saw many noted men: General Scott, Secretary Sumner, Seward, Chase and others. I attended the inaugural ball, it not being so select then as now. A few days later I attended a public reception given by the president at the White House and there shook hands with President Lincoln, the truest and grandest patriot that ever lived.

Early in March I returned to my regiment,

and found them in winter quarters near where I left them. The most important change was that they had received their horses and were fully equipped as cavalrymen. There was a nice sorrel horse ready for me, for which I was very grateful. We spent some time every day in horseback drilling which was very interesting and useful as many of the boys were not accustomed to riding and managing a horse. The drill we had one day I think is worthy of special mention. It was a brigade or perhaps division drill for there were several thousand of us in the field. The drill ground was a large, level tract of land, free from all obstructions. The orders were given by the commanding officer, through a speaking trumpet and repeated by each subordinate officer and then executed by the entire command. This large body of mounted troops, under the control of one man, with armor glistening in the morning sun, was a most brilliant spectacle; but the climax was reached when we were formed into three lines of battle, our carbines swung over our shoulders and with drawn sabers we charged on an imaginary enemy.

At the word of command we pressed our spurs into the sides of our horses. The heavy roar of their hoofs as they dashed across the great plain, the flashing of our sabers and the polished brightness of our armor, was a sight never to be witnessed in times of peace. But the peaceful scenes of camp life were soon to be exchanged for active warfare.

On the 25th of March the rebels completely surprised us, capturing Fort Steadman and breaking through our lines, cutting our communications with City Point, the base of supplies, in fact almost capturing it with all its immense army stores.

We were hustled out in such haste that we

did not have time to get our coats or blankets. We galloped to the scene as fast as possible and were halted on a corduroy road in splendid view of a rebel fort. They were not long in getting their guns to play upon us and the way they dropped the shells into our ranks was enough to try the nerves of the bravest, for the hardest part of a soldier's life is to be under the fire of the enemy and not permitted to return the fire. We could distinctly see them load their cannon, then run them up to the port holes, the smoke pour out from the mouths of the guns, then in a moment we could see the shells coming, but as we were on our horses on a bridge through a large slough, we were obliged to take the consequences. Several men and horses were struck but we soon moved off and spent the remainder of the day and the night supporting the infantry and trying to keep warm without blankets or overcoats; the ground under us was quite frozen.

On returning to camp the next morning we found everything in motion, for the great movement that culminated in the capture of Lee's army was begun. All camp equipage was abandoned, except that which was especially necessary for active service. My horse, which had shown some signs of weakness for a few days, was condemned as unfit for field service, and I, with all other dismounted men of the regiment was formed into a detachment to act as a reserve force for any emergency that might arise.

On the 28th or 29th everything was on the move, Sheridan's cavalry in the lead, then all the infantry and artillery except what was required to man the works around Petersburg and Richmond.

On the 2nd of April I was on picket about half a mile from, and in plain view of, the rebel Fort Gregg and witnessed the deadly conflict

that put the fort in our possession and caused the rebels to abandon their whole line of works and surrender the city.

The fort was a very strong one, twenty feet high or more, with a deep trench around its base, partly filled with water. Our boys made a magnificent charge and as they climbed up the sides of the fort, I could plainly see the rebels put their guns over the edge of the fort, against the heads of our brave boys and fire; the bodies rolled down the sides of the fort into the water, or the rebels would push our boys back with their bayonets as they crowded their way up to the top of the stronghold that had been dealing out such dreadful destruction until finally they were overpowered and retreated, leaving us in possession of the entire line. I passed by this fort as we followed up the retreating rebels, but I will not attempt to describe the horrors of that ghastly place. The mangled dead, the earth, the wall, and all the surroundings giving evidence of the awful conflict that raged within, filled my young heart with the unspeakable evils of war.

But to turn to a more cheerful scene.

As we were nearing the city, we were met by an indiscriminate and undescribable mass of people, all colors, ages and conditions, who came out to greet Lincoln's soldiers; but the most demonstrative were the negroes, little pickaninnies, tumbling over each other, rolling in the dirt, cutting as many antics as monkeys and apparently not many generations removed from them; old men, with tears streaming down their dirty faces which had been made rigid under many years of human bondage, old and young women dancing, singing, shouting, praising God, the Yankee soldier in general and Abe Lincoln in particular, some trying to embrace the soldiers in their wild delight, and in every conceivable way to express their

gratitude to the boys who broke the chains that held them in servitude for more than a hundred years.

Our chief duty from this time on was to guard prisoners and keep down any disturbance that might arise in the country.

We made our headquarters at Amelia Court House, where we remained until July 4, 1865, when we were called out in line, stacked our guns, piled up our knapsacks and all government property and were mustered out of the United States service, being made citizens again of this mighty republic.

The next day we started north. The deep seated joy and inconceivable pleasure that swelled every fibre of our beings on that journey home can never be expressed. The thought of having put down such a gigantic rebellion, of having saved the life of our nation and of having kept her honor and her flag untarnished, mingled with the memory of our dear comrades left under the sod on so many battle fields, the thought of being at home again among the fond associations of our boyhood days, made a commingled feeling of joy and sadness of such thrilling intensity that none can form any idea of it except those who have experienced it.

We took the boat at City Point and floated down the river to Fortress Monroe. Then we boarded our old steamer, packed with troops for Baltimore. Soon after leaving port, a great ocean swell struck us, being a storm driven in from the ocean. With a number of others, I was on the hurricane deck at the time. The wind blowing a terrific gale, the rolling of the vessel, the spray from the waves dashing over us, was all so in contrast with our former life, that we were having a hilarious time when the captain of the boat came on deck, placed us evenly on each side and end of the vessel with

the command, "If you want to see your mothers this side of Heaven, stay where we place you." This quieted our spirits for the time and the storm soon abating, we had a beautiful sail up the grand old Chesapeake.

At Baltimore we took train for Columbus, Ohio. There we were placed in Todd's barrack, situated just east of High street, where Goodale now crosses, there being no city north of that point then.

The Barracks were enclosed with a very high tight board fence and well guarded on the outside, and there were orders to let no one out.

One of our boys got a pass and by a well arranged plan came to a point in the fence and when the guard was not looking passed his pass through to another comrade on the inside. This was continued until nearly half our company got out before the ruse was detected. But we enjoyed our liberty and the trick we played on the commanding officer.

In a few days we were paid off and given our "spread eagle" (discharge) and exchanged our government blue for civilian dress and were once more citizens of our dear republic.

And now, dear boy, when you read in history of this awful struggle, of the millions of treasure, of the hundreds of thousands of lives it cost, of the weeping mothers and sorrowing fathers, of the many wounded and crippled, who would be compelled to suffer on for years, dying day by day, knowing that their young lives with all their hopes and ambitions were given that the principle of free government might be perpetuated, you may ask "was it worth the sacrifice?" I can only reply by saying that while life is very precious to its possessor, yet one life is of no great value to a community. All the functions of a community

go on apparently unimpaired by the loss of one or more of its members.

This brings my little narrative to a close. If I have written anything to increase your knowledge or patriotism, I shall feel that the effort is well made.

(Signed)

M. S. Harvey

Written in Columbus, Ohio,
May 12, 1904.





